DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 213 330 HE 014 791

AUTHOR Leavengood, Lee; And Others
TITLE The 60 and Over Tuition Waiver Programs: Who Comes? Who Stays?
PUB DATE Nov 81
NOTE 19p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Gerontological Society and the Canadian Association on Gerontology (November 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Access to Education; *Adult Students; College Attendance; Dropouts; *Free Education; Higher Education; Nontraditional Students; *Older Adults; Open Enrollment; *School Holding Power; School Orientation; Self Evaluation (Individuals); Student Attitudes; *Student Characteristics; *Tuition
IDENTIFIERS *University of South Florida

ABSTRACT

Characteristics and perceptions of participants in the Senior Citizen Tuition Waiver Program at the University of South Florida (USF) were studied, along with factors important to continuation in the program. Questionnaires were mailed to senior citizens (over 60 years old) using the waiver on all four USF campuses during the first two quarters of its implementation, fall 1980 and winter 1981. The general demographic picture of the senior citizen using the tuition waiver at USF is that the majority are married, have a college education, have an income of $15,000 or more, and are fully retired. Of the demographic characteristics, age, sex, and marital status did not make a significant difference in whether a senior returned. The majority of those who had undergraduate and graduate backgrounds did not return. There was a significant difference in the annual income: 53.1 percent of the nonreturnees had an income of $10,000 or more, while only 29.5 percent of the returnees had an income of this amount. Those who did not return worked more often either part- or full-time than those who did return for studies. While self-perception of age varied little between returnees to nonreturnees, the nonreturnees evaluated themselves as higher in physical health, physical activity, mental activity, social activity, and community involvement. This pattern suggests that returning students, as a group, may be more dependent on the educational program for satisfying personal needs, while the nonreturnees have a wider range of outside activities and support. Twice as many of the returnees attended orientation-registration than did nonreturnees. Recommendations concerning publicity and orientation-registration are offered, and a bibliography is appended. (SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED213330

The 60 And Over Tuition Waiver Programs:

Who Comes? Who Stays?

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Lee Leavengood

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

Lee Leavengood, M.A.
Director, Division of Lifelong Learning
School of Continuing Education
University of South Florida
Tampa, Florida 33620

Thomas A. Rich, Ph.D.
Director, Center for Applied Gerontology and
Chairman, Department of Gerontology
University of South Florida
Tampa, Florida 33620

Gail Lewington, B.A.
Graduate Research Assistant
University of South Florida
Now at Queens University
Kingstown, Canada

RIE014791

Nov. 1981

Tuition waivers for senior citizens in institutions of higher learning began to emerge in the United States in the mid 1960's. Long & Rossing (1979) reported that some kind of tuition waiver provision in public higher education institutions has been made in at least 43 states and the District of Columbia. Variations are found with age and extent of waiver but the movement of providing older citizens with educational opportunities seems firmly established. With a growing population of people living longer, in good health and with previous experience in higher education, it can be assumed that education for the senior citizen will continue to command attention.

The initial enrollment in the Senior Citizen Tuition Waiver Program at the University of South Florida was high compared with other reported enrollment figures. The authors believed that information on this population would be valuable. The present study includes general demographic characteristics and self perceptions of senior citizens as well as variables related to continuing in the program.

In July, 1980, Florida became the twentieth state to pass a tuition waiver for senior citizens by legislative mandate. The provisions of this waiver are similar to other legislative mandates, except that credit is not allowed. The provisions include:

(1) Persons 60 years of age or older who meet Florida residency requirements and who attend credit classes in a state university may be allowed to enroll on a space available basis without payment of the application fee and registration fee.

(2) No academic credit shall be awarded for attendance in classes for which fees are waived under this rule.

This waiver is important to the State of Florida because of its growing population in the age group affected by the waiver.

The University of South Florida in Tampa serves a growing area heavily populated with adults over the age of 60. Although the University serves a 15 county area with its main campus and three regional campuses, the majority of senior citizens come from the counties shown below on Table 1.

Table 1

1979 Population Age 60+ by County

	Number	Total Population	Percent
Hillsborough	100,988	634,469	15.9%
Manatee	56,616	141,188	40.1%
Pasco	71,340	161,873	44.1%
Pinellas	286,640	725,457	39.5%
Sarasota	86,077	192,324	44.8%

The University of South Florida, with a student body of approximately 25,000 has a history of serving students over the traditional age. Over 40% of the current students are over the age of 25. Before the waiver was in effect, there were over 100 students over the age of 65 taking courses for credit. The University is, therefore, accustomed to serving older students.

Implementation

The implementation of the tuition waiver program was initiated by the Advisor for Mature Students in Student Affairs. Guidelines and

registration forms were established and approved. The tuition waiver program actually began in the Fall Quarter, 1980. A centralized orientation-registration was set up on the Tampa Campus for the convenience of senior citizens as well as for University personnel.

At this program, senior citizens received a worksheet, registration form, schedule of classes, catalog, campus map, library card and parking permit. In addition they received warm welcomes from the Vice President of Student Affairs, college deans and several faculty members. Academic advisors for each college played a key role in the registration process by trying to match the senior citizen's interest with courses where space was available. This centralized program provided encouragement, information and convenience. Approximately 75 senior citizens attended the initial program, slightly more than half of the total number who registered. A less centralized system was provided for those who did not attend the orientation program.

An advisory council was formed from students attending the orientation-registration who indicated an interest in serving. Members of this council helped with publicity and a telephone network. Six members were trained as peer advisors to help with subsequent programs.

In addition to the physical planning arrangements, a considerable effort was made to alert and inform faculty, staff and students about the Senior Citizen Tuition Waiver Program. Their cooperation and acceptance of the senior citizens helped to make this a successful and growing program at the University.

Methodology

The purpose of the study is twofold:

1) To determine the general demographic characteristics and perceptions of senior citizens enrolled in the Tuition Waiver Programs and

2) To discover the most significant variables involved in determining whether the student remained in the program.

The questionnaire* used to obtain data for this paper was produced through the combined and cooperative effort of the Gerontology Department and the Office of Student Affairs. The questionnaire was sent to senior citizens using the waiver on all four USF campuses during the first two quarters of its implementation, Fall 1980 and Winter 1981. A total of 261 questionnaires was mailed with business reply envelopes enclosed. The return rate was 67.8% for the two quarters. The questionnaire was divided into two parts: part one to obtain a background profile and part two to obtain an evaluation of the program.

Table 2

Sample Population

	Quarter I	Quarter II
Total Questionnaires Sent	89	127
Total Number Returned		
Total Questionnaires Answered	85	86
Total Questionnaires Returned Unanswered	4	2

*Questionnaire was prepared by Rosslyn Leatherdale, a graduate student in the Department of Gerontology under the supervision of the Advisor for Mature Students.

Demographic Characteristics of Returnees and Non-Returnees

In Quarter I, 1980 a total of 140 senior citizens used the waiver. Of the 85 who responded, 36 returned (referred to as returnees) and 49 did not return (referred to as non-returnees). The first variables to be considered are: age, sex, marital status, education, income, and employment.

Table 3

Table 3 shows that the mean age of the returnees and non-returnees is 66 and 68 respectively while the age range is 61-78 and 60-78, showing no difference in age. It is interesting to discover that 63.9% of the returnees are female while only 33.3% of the returnees are male. In contrast, the non-returnees shows an almost even distribution by sex.

There is little difference in the returnees and non-returnees regarding marital status. Fewer divorced students returned. In contrast, a slightly higher percentage of widowed persons returned.

A greater percentage of those with college experience, undergraduate and graduate, came and did not return. Of those with a high school education or less, 26.2% returned while 13.9% did not. Thus, more people with advanced education used the waiver yet fewer of them returned.

A breakdown of annual income shows that of the returnees, 45.6% had an annual income of $10,000 or above while 82.7% of the non-returnees had an income over $10,000. Of the non-returnees, 32.7% reported an income of $25,000 or above. A total of 10.6% did not respond to this question on income. This breakdown shows that as income increases, the probability of returning decreases.

Among those working full or part-time, 30.6% did not return while

16.7% did return. Slightly more of those fully retired did return.

From information in Table 3, it can be concluded that: more women returned than men, more married people returned than widows or divorcees, more retirees returned than non-retirees and that the returnees had less education and less income than non-returnees.

In summary, the persons most likely to remain in the program are female, married, have some previous college experience, have incomes in the lower and middle range and are retired.

Self Perceptions Contributing to Continuing in Tuition Waiver Program

In an age perception question, slightly more of the non-returnees perceived themselves as still young. Of the non-returnees, 61.2% considered themselves middle age while 72.2% of the returnees considered themselves as middle age. There is little difference in their perception of being old and none felt they were very old.

Regarding physical health, 46.9% of the non-returnees considered their health as excellent while 25.2% of the returnees considered their health to be excellent. A slightly greater percentage of the returnees than the non-returnees consider their health as poor.

Table 4

Table 4 shows how senior citizens perceive themselves as to physical activity, mental activity, social activity and community involvement.

Fewer returnees consider their physical activity to be high or very high, 23.4% as contrasted to the non-returnees who consider their physical activity as high or very high, 51%.

The non-returnees, 79.6%, consider their mental activity to be high or very high, while 55.5% of the returnees consider their mental activity to be high or very high. More of the returnees consider their mental activity to be moderate than do the non-returnees.

More of the non-returnees consider their social activity to be high or very high than do the returnees. More of the returnees consider their social activity to be low than do the non-returnees. The majority of both groups consider their social activity to be moderate.

Concerning community involvement, 28.5% of the non-returnees consider their involvement high or very high while 16.7% of the returnees consider their community involvement to be high to very high. The majority of both groups consider their community involvement to be moderate or low.

It can be concluded that the non-returnees perceive themselves to be younger and in better health than the returnee. From Table 3, it can be determined that the non-returnees consider themselves to have a higher physical and mental activity than the returnees. The non-returnees are also more involved in the community than the returnee.

To summarize the returnees, most of this group perceive themselves to be middle aged rather than young or old. They do not perceive their health as good as did the non-returnees. The returnees perceive their physical activity to be moderate, their mental activity to be high (but much less than non-returnees), their social activities and community involvement to be moderate.

University Situations Contributing to Continuing in Tuition Waiver Program

Both returnees and non-returnees found the registration process acceptable. Only 4.0% of the non-returnees found the process unacceptable.

The remaining returnees and non-returnees found it acceptable with some changes.

Table 5 gives information on reactions to the orientation-registration and courses.

Table 5

Reaction to Orientation/Registration and Courses

Question Asked	Returnees		Non-Returnees		Total	
Did you attend Orientation and Registration?	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	30	83.3	21	42.8	51	60.0
No	5	13.9	27	55.1	32	37.6
Did you find the session helpful?						
Yes	30	100.0	20	95.2	50	98.0
No	0	0.0	1	4.8	1	2.0
Were you able to enroll in the course(s) you wanted?						
Yes	34	94.4	39	79.6	73	85.9
No	1	2.8	10	20.4	11	12.9

As shown in Table 5, attendance at orientation-registration appears to be related to continuing as a student. At this point, it is not possible to determine whether this is related to the impact of the orientation procedure or simply the characteristics of those who attended the session.

The returnees enrolled in the courses of their choice at a percentage rate of 94.4% compared with the percentage rate of 79.6% of the non-returnees. The returnees are slightly more satisfied with their courses than the non-returnees.

One-half of the returnees, 50.6%, reported a very positive experience with the faculty while 40.8% of the non-returnees claimed a very positive experience. A negative or very negative experience with the faculty was reported by 10.2% of the non-returnees while the returnees did not report any negative experience.

Only 4.0% of the non-returnees reported a very negative or negative experience with students while returnees did not have any negative experiences. The remainder of both groups reported about the same average, positive and very positive experiences.

Areas of Study Selected by Senior Citizens

The majority of senior citizens in both quarters took only one course. Of the non-returnees, 58.1% took only one course, 22.6% took two courses, 16.1% took three courses, and 3.2% took four courses. Of the returnees, 81.3% took one course while 18.7% took two courses and none of this group took more than two courres. Courses were taken on undergraduate and graduate levels.

Table 6

Courses Selected by College

College	Quarter I - Total	Quarter II - Total
Fine Arts	16.4 %	20.0 %
Arts and Letters	24.3 %	34.7 %
Social and Behavior Sciences	27.9 %	26.3 %
Business	17.3 %	1.1 %
Education	2.7 %	7.4 %
Natural Sciences	4.1 %	8.4 %
Engineering	1.0 %	1.1 %
Physical Education	1.0 %	1.1 %
Medieval France	5.3 %	- -

According to Table 6, the three colleges with the greatest number of senior citizens are: Arts and Letters, Social and Behavioral Sciences and Fine Arts. The professional colleges such as Nursing and Education have few general interest courses. The Colleges of Engineering, Business and Natural Sciences have few openings because of high demand. Course selections range from beginning piano, beginning Russian to graduate courses in gerontology and philosophy.

Findings

The general demographic picture of the senior citizen using the tuition waiver at USF is that the majority are married, have a college education, have an income of $15,000 or more, and are fully retired.

The enrollment figures show an increase in Quarter II over Quarter I of 36 students. According to Long & Rossing, enrollment may well increase with more publicity.

Of the demographic characteristics, age, sex and marital status did not make a significant difference in whether or not a senior citizen returned. There was a difference in the amount of education since the majority of those with undergraduate and graduate work did not return. There was a significant difference in the annual income: 53.1% of the non-returnees had an income of $10,000 or more while only 29.5% of the returnees had an income of this amount. A possible conclusion is that those with more education and income have more options to pursue non-structured educational opportunities such as travel, theatre, concerts, etc.

Another area where there is a difference is that of part or full-time employment. Of those who did not return, 30.6% worked part or full-time as opposed to 16.7% who did return. It is reasonable to assume that those who are working have less time to take courses.

While self-perception of age varied little comparing returnees to non-returnees, the non-returnees evaluated themselves as higher in physical health, physical activity, mental activity, social activity and community involvement. This pattern suggests that returning students, as a group, may be more dependent on the educational program for satisfying

personal needs, while the non-returnees have a wider range of outside activities and support.

Approximately 20% of the non-returnees did not get the course or courses they desired. Because senior citizens are accepted on a space available basis, this figure is not alarming. Also, those who did not attend the orientation-registration had more problems in getting the courses of their choice.

The non-returnees are slightly more dissatisfied with their course or courses and with their relationships with faculty and students than are the returnees.

The majority of senior citizens only took one course per quarter. Non-returnees, 42.9%, took two or more courses while only 18.7% of the returnees took two courses. It is possible that the non-returnees over extended themselves and became frustrated.

A majority of the senior citizens in both quarters enrolled in the Colleges of Arts and Letters, Social and Behavioral Sciences and Fine Arts. There is little difference in the percentages of the returnees or non-returnees in the various colleges except in the College of Business. This may imply that individuals took a course or courses for personal or work-related purposes in personal finance, real estate and, therefore, attained the purpose for enrolling. It is also possible that the courses were more difficult than anticipated and that the individuals were discouraged from returning.

A major difference between the returnees and the non-returnees was in registration-orientation attendance. Over half (55.0%) of the non-returnees did not attend orientation-registration. To state this positively, 83.3% of the returnees and 42.8% of the non-returnees did attend this program. This means that the non-returnees who did not attend the program

did not receive information, materials and advising that would have contributed to their selection of classes. The individuals who did not attend orientation-registration could register during the first week of classes. It is possible that course selection was even more limited than at the time of the orientation-registration.

Materials such as maps, catalogs, schedules, parking permits, and library cards were available at the registration-orientation. These amenities could contribute to the overall satisfaction of a student and were not as convenient to obtain on an individual basis. Also the general information as well as the specific advising by advisers from each of the colleges is invaluable in selecting and registering for courses as well as adding to the familiarity of the program and the campus. It can be generally concluded that a centralized orientation-registration with academic advising is an important and valuable program for senior citizens.

General Description of Returnees and Non-Returnees

1) There was little difference in age (median age 67)
2) More females returned than males.
3) Approximately two-thirds of each group are now married, although more of the returnees are widowed.
4) The non-returnees showed higher formal educational attainment than the returnees.
5) Income is higher for non-returnees with over half of this group in the $20,000+ category while the returnees are concentrated in the middle income range of $6,000-19,999.
6) More non-returnees than returnees reported that they were working either part-time or full-time.

7) Physical and mental activity was reportedly higher for the non-returnee than returnee.

8) Social and community activity was slightly higher for the non-returnees.

9) Twice as many of the returnees attended orientation-registration and slightly more of the returnees than non-returnees found the session helpful.

10) More of the returnees than non-returnees were able to enroll in the courses of their choice.

11) The breakdown of courses by college was approximately the same for both groups.

Although the information used in this report only encompasses the initial two quarters of the program at USF, it does add information to an area where little has been reported and few comparisons can be made.

The implications of these findings must be studied further and augmented by information to make more valid conclusions. Meanwhile the information has been helpful in future planning at the University. The demographic characteristics could be generalized to states in the Sun Belt or other institutions in the area. It is hoped that it will be helpful for other institutions who are planning or revising programs for senior citizens using tuition waiver.

Recommendations for Planning Senior Citizen Programs

Since a majority of senior citizens each quarter indicated that they learned about this program through the newspaper rather than TV and radio, it can be assumed that the best method of distributing information to this age group is the press. The next most effective method was word-of-mouth, which was higher the second quarter (21.1%) than the first quarter (16.8%).

Although there is no supportive data, an observation is that those who did not attend the orientation-registration sessions seem less organized and self-directed thus requiring more individual advising time.

The time and energy involved in setting up an orientation-registration for a group is far less than the time and energy in trying to handle individuals coming in for information or directions. The orientation-registration proved valuable to the senior citizens as indicated in the previous section and it was certainly valuable to the university staff. The session seemed to help the senior citizen feel a part of a group as well as part of the institution. A well publicized centralized orientation-registration is strongly recommended.

An advisory council proved successful in acting as a support group for the senior citizens, providing suggestions for subsequent planning, and furnishing a volunteer pool for peer advisors and telephones, publicity and other committees. Thus the formation of a volunteer advisory counsil is recommended.

A further recommendation is the selection, appointment and training of a volunteer director for the entire program. An appointment by the president of the university of a husband and wife team using the waiver proved to be a valuable time and energy saver for university personnel who retain the ultimate responsibility for the program.

Bibliography

Chelslrg, K., Tummerman, S., "Tuition Policies of Higher Educational Institutions, State Government & the Older Learner", Educational Gerontology: An International Quarterly, 4:147-159, 1979, p. 147-159.

Graney, M., Hays, W., "Senior Students: Higher Education After Age 62", Educational Gerontology: An International Quarterly, 1:343-359, 1976, p. 343-359.

Hooper, J.O., March, G.B., "A Study of Older Students Attending University Classes", Educational Gerontology: An International Quarterly, 3:321-330, 1978.

Kraft, J., Guterbind, C., Older People in Florida 1980-81, A Statistical Abstract, The University Presses of Florida, Gainesville, 1981.

Long, A., Rossing, B., "Tuition Waivers for Older Americans", Lifelong Learning: The Adult Years, June, 1977, p. 10-13.

Long, H., Rossing, B., "Tuition Waiver Plans for Older Americans in Post-secondary Public Education Institutions", Educational Gerontology: An International Quarterly, 4:161-174, 1979.

Studies for Further Reading

Edelson, I., "The Role of State University Systems in Providing Educational Opportunities for Senior Citizens", Educational Gerontology: An International Quarterly, 3:175-187, 1978.

Hiemstra, R., "Continuing Education for the Aged: A Survey of Needs and Interests of Older People", Adult Education, Vol. XX11, No. 02, 1972, p. 100-109.

Rappole, G., "An Overview of Community College Programs for Elderly Texans", Community/Junior College Research Quarterly, 1977, 1, p. 363-387.

Table 3

General Demographic Characteristics of Returnees and Non-Returnees
Quarter I, 1980

Characteristic	Returnees		Non-Returnees		Total	
Age: Mean	66		68		67	
Range	61-78+		60-78+		60-78+	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Sex: Male	12	33.3	25	51.0	37	43.5
Female	23	63.9	23	46.9	46	54.1
Marital Status:						
Now Married	24	66.7	34	69.4	58	68.2
Widowed	9	25.0	5	10.2	14	16.5
Divorced/Separated	2	5.6	6	12.2	8	9.4
Never Married	0	0	2	4.1	2	2.4
Years of Education						
Elementary	0	0	2	3.1	2	1.9
High School	11	26.2	7	10.8	18	16.8
College (1-4 years)	15	35.7	30	46.2	45	42.1
Graduate Studies	8	19.0	10	15.4	18	16.8
Other Technical	8	19.0	16	24.6	24	22.4
Income:						
$ 0-5,999	4	11.1	3	6.1	7	8.3
$ 6,000-9,999	7	19.4	2	4.1	9	10.5
$10,000-14,999	8	22.2	7	14.3	15	17.6
$15,000-19,999	5	13.9	7	14.3	12	14.1
$20,000-24,999	2	5.6	10	20.4	12	14.1
$25,000+	5	13.9	16	32.7	21	24.7
Employment:						
Working Full-Time	11	2.8	7	14.3	8	9.4
Working Part-time	5	13.9	8	16.3	13	15.3
Retired	27	75.0	32	65.3	59	69.4
Other	3	4.0	0	0	3	3.5

Table 4

Self Perceptions of Returnees and Non-Returnees

Perception of:	Returnees		Non-Returnees		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Physical Activity						
High to Very High	12	23.4	25	51.0	37	43.6
Moderate	19	52.8	21	42.9	40	47.1
Low to Very Low	4	11.1	3	6.1	7	8.3
Mental Activity						
High to Very High	20	55.5	39	79.6	59	69.4
Moderate	16	44.4	8	16.3	24	28.2
Low to Very Low	0	0	1	2.0	1	1.2
Social Activity						
High to Very High	7	19.5	16	32.6	23	27.0
Moderate	24	66.7	28	57.1	52	61.2
Low to Very Low	5	13.9	4	8.2	9	10.6
Community Involvement						
High to Very High	6	16.7	14	28.5	20	23.5
Moderate	16	44.4	17	34.7	33	38.8
Low to Very Low	12	33.4	18	36.8	30	35.3